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SUBJECT: ST. LUCIA PM SIR JOHN COMPTON ON LIFE SUPPORT

REF: BRIDGETOWN 589

Classified By: CDA Anthony Fisher for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (U) SUMMARY: St. Lucia Prime Minister Sir John Compton's health has starkly deteriorated. On September 1, he was flown to Martinique where he is currently on life support. Compton's chosen successor, current Acting Prime Minister Stephenson King, appears positioned to officially succeed him as prime minister. End Summary.

COMPTON IN CRITICAL CONDITION

12. (U) Prime Minister Sir John Compton was flown to Martinique September 1 for medical treatment as his health deteriorated throughout the week. Compton was hospitalized August 27 for chest pains, but released the next day under the guise that he was stable. Compton is currently in intensive care and on life support because he is unable to support natural breathing. Acting Prime Minister Stephenson King publicly stated that St. Lucians should prepare for the worst.

THE LAST LAP IN THE LEADERSHIP RACE

13. (SBU) As St. Lucians sit on edge following the health of the father of St. Lucian independence, they are also awaiting the climax of the race for leadership among ruling party officials ongoing since May, when a series of strokes and other medical conditions forced Compton to remove himself from an active role in government proceedings. At this time, APM King appears to be the most likely, most palatable, and most popular candidate to succeed Compton. According to various private conversations between PolOff and government officials and political observers, King's confidence and stature as prime minister have increased significantly during his three months acting in Compton's stead, as has public confidence in his ability to do the job. Currently, the public's greatest demand and the administration's top priority is returning stability to the government, and King is seen as the most likely to bring this desired stability and to continue along the course Compton has plotted for St. Lucia. The ruling United Workers Party (UWP) plans to solidify its leadership structure during its national convention in October.

14. (C) Although the UWP cabinet will most likely appoint King to the coveted post, Rufus Bousquet, the former foreign minister fired by Compton, has announced his intention to contend for the job. Rumors also continue to abound that

Housing Minister Richard Frederick, infamous for alleged ties to narcotraffickers and currently under investigation for possible customs duties evasion, is using his abundant resources to vie for power behind the scenes. However, most political pundits believe that Frederick will presently support King as prime minister for the sake of stability and bide his time for a more opportune moment to assert power.

THE POSSIBLE MONKEY WRENCH

15. (C) Terence Leonard, Comptroller of Customs and head of the investigation against Frederick, informed PolOff that he believes the government is actively inhibiting his ability to investigate and charge Frederick for customs duties evasion. In May, King sent Leonard to the Embassy to request assistance in St. Lucia's investigation against Frederick (reftel). Leonard now believes that King and Frederick have reached a political compromise that included stopping the investigation. (Note: PolOff has heard of such a compromise from multiple sources, but has been unable to confirm details. End Note.) Leonard told PolOff that, if his investigation continues to be blocked, he will go public with any evidence he has of government officials hindering his investigation, regardless of the damage such evidence may do to King or the UWP administration.

COMMENT

16. (C) Although this may be the end of Compton's term as prime minister, he appears to have successfully kept the UWP administration from imploding during its leadership crisis. From his sickbed, it seems that Compton managed to pull the strings that will keep King, his hand-picked successor, in power, at least in the short-term. Prior to the leadership crisis, St. Lucia rejected Petrocaribe and showed a willingness, at least in rhetoric, to better its working relationship with the United States. A stable UWP government continuing down Compton's paths could result in a government receptive to U.S. positions on foreign policy matters.

17. (C) Since his first interaction with PolOff, Leonard has ardently talked about bringing Frederick to justice. He has consistently claimed his reasons are solely for the sake of justice and the good of St. Lucia. It seems, however, that this investigation has become a personal vendetta for Leonard; he once admitted to contending against Frederick when the two were in secondary school together. As such, it appears that Leonard's willingness to discredit the current administration, including King, for hampering his investigation against Frederick is a sincere threat as Leonard might see such a move as the only way to force justice against Frederick.

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